

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 EB-08 COME-00 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00
STR-04 SIL-01 LAB-04 /063 W
-----230551Z 044154 /14
R 222002Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5382

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3808

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, EPAP, SOCI, PINT, UR
SUBJECT: AGRICULTURAL COMMENTS IN BREZHNEV'S TRADE UNION SPEECH

1. SUMMARY: BREZHNEV, COMMENTED
BRIEFLY ON SOVIET FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS. HIS RE-
MARKS CONTAIN INKLINGS OF NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS WHICH WERE
PROBABLY MOTIVATED BY THE CONTINUING FOOD PROBLEM, MAINLY
MEAT. WHETHER OR NOT MEANINGFUL AGRICULTURAL POLICY CHANGES
WERE BEING HERALDED CANNOT BE KNOWN UNTIL OTHER AGRICULTURAL
STATEMENTS APPEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV MADE SEVERAL AGRICULTURAL
REFERENCES IN THIS SPEECH TO THE 16TH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS
YESTERDAY. MAJOR POINTS WERE ON "THE PROBLEM OF INCREASING
THE OUTPUT OF MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS." AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED,
HE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ITS SOLUTION, BUT SHOWED CONCERN ABOUT
EXPEDITING SUCH INCREASES.

3. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO MENTION BRIEFLY INTER-FARM
COMPLEXES AND THE ROLE OF STATE AND COLLECTIVE FARMS IN
ACHIEVING HIGHER PRODUCTION. THIS WAS AGAIN TO HAVE
BEEN ANTICIPATED THOUGH THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS REMARKS ON
INSTITUTIONS WAS OFF-BEAT IN TERMS OF THE DOGMA WHICH HAS
APPEARED SINCE THE 25TH CONGRESS. WE WILL COMMENT FURTHER
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ON THIS SHORTLY.

4. BREZHNEV'S SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM RECENT PARTY
POLEMICS WAS HIS STATEMENT, ALBEIT BRIEF, ON "THE (LIVE-
STOCK PRODUCTION) POSSIBILITIES OF PRIVATE SUBSIDIARY PLOTS
AND HIS CALL ON LOCAL BODIES AND STATE AND COLLECTIVE FARMS
TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS WORK." GOVERNMENT AND PARTY

SPOKESMEN HAVE INDEED, DURING THE DIFFICULT 1976 MEAT SHORT-AGES, MADE INFREQUENT REFERENCE TO THE PRIVATE PLOTS AND EVEN ENCOURAGED THE "SOCIALIZED" SECTOR TO SUPPORT SUCH OPERATIONS WITH FEED, AS HAS BEEN DONE DURING SMILAR PERIODS IN PAST. SUCH ARTICLES, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ON THE WHOLE AT VERY LOW LEVEL. ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS IN OUR RECENTLY SUBMITTED AGRICULTURAL SITUATION REPORT.

5. THIS CURRENT STATEMENT ON THE NEED FOR PRIVATE PLOT LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS BY THE HIGHEST SOVIET CITIZEN IS SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE. IT IS AN EMBARRASSMENT, AMOUNTING AS IT DOES TO ADMISSION THAT THE SOCIALIZED SECTOR IS UNABLE TO RESOLVE MEAT SUPPLY PROBLEMS DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE PREFACED HIS REMARKS BY SAYING THAT THE PUBLIC ROLE IN THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR IS BASIC.

6. WE HAVE, INCIDENTALLY, NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND SUCH A REFERENCE TO PRIVATE PLOTS BY EITHER BREZHNEV OR KOSYGIN IN THEIR SPEECHES AT THE 25TH CONGRESS, AND ONLY BRIEFEST VAGUE MENTION WAS MADE IN THE "DIRECTIONS". BREZHNEV DID, HOWEVER, MAKE A SIMILAR REFERENCE IN HIS CC PLENUM SPEECH IN OCTOBER TO PRIVATE PLOTS NOT BEING ABANDONED AND GIVEN SUPPORT.

7. BREZHNEV'S BRIEF COMMENTS ON INTER-FARM COMPLEXES AND STATE AND COLLECTIVE FARM LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS SEEM TO CONTAIN NEW EMPHASES. BY TONE, HE APPEARS TO DEFER THE COMPLEX PANACEA INTO THE MORE DISTANT FUTURE.
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WHILE COMING CLOSE TO SCAPEGOATING STATE FARMS AND COLLECTIVES FOR CUTTING BACK TOO PRECIPITOUSLY AND RAPIDLY ON LIVESTOCK, HE SIMULTANEOUSLY REFURBISHES THE IMAGE OF THESE OLDER AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONAL FORMS WHICH BECAME MORE THAN A LITTLE BRUISED LAST YEAR IN THE RUSH OF STATEMENTS ON THE "NEW" (OUR QUOTES) APPROACH.

8. OTHER LESS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS WERE TOUCHED UPON, AND AGAIN NEW TWISTS WERE INCLUDED. THEY WERE: (A) IMPROVING RETAIL DISTRIBUTION THROUGH CONSUMER COOPERATIVES (WHICH COULD ALSO ADDITIONALLY TAP OUTPUT OF PRIVATE PLOTS AND COLLECTIVES); (B) REAFFIRMING GRAIN PRODUCTION AS THE "CORNERSTONE" OF SUCCESSFUL GOSU LIVESTOCK PROGRAMS AND STRESSING OF FEED GRAIN OUTPUT AND IRRIGATED PASTURES AND FORAGE CROPS; (C) STABILIZING FOOD DISTRIBUTION WHICH ALSO REQUIRES IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION, STORAGE AND PROCESSING OF FARM PRODUCE. HE

SAID THAT THESE FUNCTIONS CAN BE AIDED BY BETTER
MANAGEMENT AND SUCH PROSPOSALS MUST BE EXPEDITED.

9. COMMENT: BREZHNEV'S SPEECH WAS NOT AN
AGRICULTURAL POLICY DOCUMENT. MAIN IMPORTANCE TO HIS
REMARKS MAY LIE IN THE FACT THAT HE FELT IT NECESSARY,
AT THIS TIME, TO PUBLICIZE NEW OR CHANGED SOLUTIONS
TO THE MEAT PROBLEM AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN GENERAL.
AT THE LEAST, THIS PROBABLY MEANS THAT THE PARTY IS
AWARE THAT SOVIET CITIZENS ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE FOOD
SITUATION. IT MAY ALSO SIGNIFY RECOGNITION THAT DIS-
SATISFACTION WITH CONTINUING MEAT AND VEGETABLE SHORT-
AGES IN INCREASING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, LABOR UNIONS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW03808
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770098-1075
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770335/aaaabehe.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b7ea34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3036121
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AGRICULTURAL COMMENTS IN BREZHNEV'S TRADE UNION SPEECH
TAGS: EAGR, EPAP, SOCI, PINT, UR, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b7ea34b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009